

Ethical Leadership and the Delivery of Agricultural Advisory Services in Tanzania LGAs

Wilfred Uronu Lameck*

Senior Lecturer, School of Public Administration and Management of Mzumbe University, Tanzania

**Corresponding Author: Wilfred Uronu Lameck, Senior Lecturer, School of Public Administration and Management of Mzumbe University, Tanzania*

ABSTRACT

Effective delivery of public services at sub national levels of government depends on how policy officers at the council level plan, instruct and demonstrate the exemplary leadership to the field workers who have direct interface with service recipients. Like other services, the delivery of agricultural advisory services in Tanzania has been reported to be ineffective due to persisting nonfunctioning administrative bureaucracy and lack of morale of field workers who consider payment for service as their prime motives. This paper reports on the leader-follower relationship in the delivery of agricultural advisory services in the two local governments in Tanzania. Furthermore, it reports on the means through which ethical leadership framework can be applied to improve the delivery of such services.

Key words: *Ethical leadership; Agricultural advisory services; Tanzania LGAs*

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural advisory services implies the transfer of knowledge on agricultural technology to farmers; the assistance of farmers' groups in the development and execution of special projects to enhance production or improve marketing skills; and the collective training of farmers either in field schools or in workshop like settings (Sanga et al. 2013). On the other hand ethical leadership implies demonstration of required behavior or conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships. This includes promotion of such behavior to the followers through two-way communication and reinforcement (Brown et al., 2005). To be more precise, the ethical leadership constitutes three important components: the personal integrity of the leader, also termed the 'moral person' component of ethical leadership; the extent to which a leader is able to cultivate integrity among his or her followers and the quality of the leader-follower relationship, which bridges the moral person and moral manager components (Treviño, Hartman, and Brown 2000).

Tanzania government has taking the number of initiatives to improve the delivery of agricultural advisory services. For example in 1999, the delivery of such services was decentralized to local government due the weakness of centralized regime which was criticized for hindering a smooth flow of information and lack of

responsiveness of extension officers to farmer's needs. Since then, the local departments of agriculture and livestock, instructed and supervised by the local councils, are responsible for the planning and delivery of the services. Field extension officers operate from the offices of the administrative sub units of local government, the wards or villages. From there, they visit individual farmers, farmers groups and villages to provide their services in direct contact with farmers. The officials in the local government department of agriculture at the district level instruct and supervise the field workers.

Nevertheless, service delivery does not meet the expectations set at the beginning of the reforms. The goal of the agricultural policy is that the farmers, with the help of extension workers must articulate their needs and that extension programs are based on the input provided by farmers but in practice, local programs and service delivery do not reflect the preferences of the farmers. The question is what goes wrong? Do the policy officers at the local council communicate their expectations and standard of service to field workers? Do they lead by example? Can ethical leadership explain the aforesaid service gap? To answer these questions, the remaining part of this article proceeds with the methodology and analytical frame, the task of both field workers and district council in the delivery of agricultural advisory services, unethical behavior of field

workers and finally lack of effective leader – follower relationship in the delivery of agricultural advisory services and the way ethical leadership can explain such gap.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses comparative case study design to study the delivery of agricultural advisory services in two local governments: Morogoro Municipality in Eastern Tanzania, and Hai District in the North; apart from the research on the planning for service, in each of the two cases a detailed study of the contact between district level officials and field workers on one hand and the contact between field workers and the farmers on the other hand was conducted in three wards, administrative sub units of local government. The research activities included: the analysis of policy and planning documents in the local governments; interviews with more than 50 policy officials and field workers on how they plan for the delivery of service and 12 focus group discussions with farmers and their representatives concerning the actual service delivery.

ANALYTICAL FRAME

In order to analyze the behavior of agricultural policy officers and field workers, this research uses ethical leadership framework. A number of scholars offer frameworks to describe the role of ethical leadership in the delivery of public service. By definition it means value based leadership which implies a leadership guided by values in the performance of daily activities of the organization. Ethical leader in this case is a role model who is expected to provide direction on how to behave (Harrison 2005). Ethical leaders do not only talk about ethics and promoting ethical behavior but also provide their followers with voice and examples. The leader must set ethical standards reward ethical conduct and discipline unethical conduct while considering ethical consequence of their decision (Brown 2005). This can be summarized by ethical leadership framework by Brown et al 2005 Brown & Trevino 2006, Trevino & Brown 2005 and 2007 which is echoed into Ciulla 2004. According to this framework, an ethical leader must demonstrate the ethics of a leader as a person, the ethics of a leader- follower relationship, the ethics of a process of leadership, the ethics of what a leader does or does not do and the ethics of a leader in the larger context of the community. Therefore, the leader-follower relationship between policy officers and the field workers was analyzed.

THE TASK OF DISTRICT OR MUNICIPAL LEADERS IN THE DELIVERY OF AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES

The delivery of agricultural advisory in Tanzania has been decentralized to local government. In the district or municipalities, a number of planning officers in agriculture and livestock instruct, supervise, assist and coordinate the activities of the field workers. The guidelines attribute a number of tasks to the District Executive Director. The first is to monitor and report the activities of plan implementation to the respective ministry through the regional secretariat. Second, the District Executive Director must supervise and coordinate the delivery of support services, such as the extension services, the dissemination of agricultural information and animal health services. Third, the DED is responsible for the disbursement of resources for activities that are included in the District Agricultural Development Plan. Specifically, the DED has to facilitate timely disbursement of grant funds to communities and groups. He must thereby ensure compliance of agricultural development activities with district and national development priorities. In practice, it is the district agriculture and livestock officer and the policy officers under his/her department who assist the district executive or municipal director to ensure the effective supervision, coordination and monitoring of such services (URT 2006).

THE TASK OF FIELD WORKERS

The field workers function at the lowest level: the ward or village. These workers are in charge of linking farmers with extension services. Specifically, they responsible to Support farmers and their groups through training and maintaining their network; support farmers in writing proposals for service contracts; support up-scaling of successful activities and ensuring the dissemination of successful stories and facilitate farmer access to and dissemination of agricultural information and assist the farmers to carry out the trials in collaboration with research institutes (URT 2006b).

In order to guide the field workers, there is an annual calendar which describes the type of extension services which are supposed to be delivered to farmers in a particular period of time. For example, the annual calendar indicates that in November and December the extension officers have to advise the farmers on the early preparation of farms, on the proper use of farm equipment and how to use modern principles of

planting. From January to April, the extension officers have to advise farmers on the accessibility of seeds and planting. In February and March, they have to advise the farmers on weeding while in April, May and June advice must be provided on plant protection; in May, June and July their activities must relate to harvesting. Services on poultry fever immunization must be provided throughout the year.

The annual calendar is a standard format developed by central government. In both local governments involved the research, field workers are supposed to follow the standard calendar but they are also allowed to adjust it to reflect local realities (Interviews district agricultural officers). In mountainous areas, especially in the rural part of the municipality or in the areas which are suitable for irrigation, farmers grow vegetables; the extension officers adjust the calendar to fit them (Interview with field workers and weekly schedule).

In planning for their activities, the extension officials are supposed to construct their working schedule from the annual calendar. In doing that, they have to cooperate with ward executive officers. The schedule they develop shows the breakdown of activities and respective areas and time, when and where the field workers have to visit. The content of the schedule shows that it is not a binding document and it can change at any time depending on the instruction from supervisors and the urgent needs of citizens (Interview with field workers and weekly schedule).

UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR OF THE FIELD WORKERS

The working schedules imply that each extension official every month makes home visits to farmers to advise and support them. In practice, these visits are not carried out as programmed. Extension officials dedicate a substantial part of their time to farmers who call upon them to treat cattle and fight crop diseases. These services are not rendered for free. Extension officials charge for their services and claim that the money is needed to pay for the transport, as the municipality does not provide them with a fuel allowance. Farmers also pay for the medicine (and insecticides) the extension officials use when treating cattle and controlling crop diseases. As a general rule, farmers who call upon extension officials for assistance and are willing to pay for the services are given priority over other farmers. Field workers label these calls as ‘emergencies’, which justifies that they do not keep to the original working

schedule. The researcher found a series of examples of this practice during his field work.

In one of the wards, he observed that the extension official had a number of farmers waiting at her office who came for advice. When she received a call from two farming sisters asking her to provide mango immunization, she told the farmers in her office that an emergency had come up and she left to provide the requested mango immunization, for which she was paid. After that, she visited a farmer whose pigs were reported to be ill. She diagnosed the disease, provided treatment and asked the farmer a payment of 15,000 Tsh, which he willingly paid (Observation and interview field worker in Morogoro).

Home visits to farmers who do not actively call upon extension officers for paid assistance, only take place if the farmers live nearby the office or home of the extension officer. Even then, extension officers expect something in return for their services. If they think farmers can or will not give them anything, they try to avoid visiting them. As one field worker explained to the researcher: “You must understand that I cannot go to visit a farmer to advise him on the growth of his maize, if he is not willing to give me a ripe corn as a thanks for my service.”

In fact, with respect to individual farmers, the overall picture is that extension officers operate as small entrepreneurs, who buy fuel and medicine themselves – as the municipal government does not – to service paying farmers. Some, as a second job, even exploit a shop where they sell agricultural input. The consequence of this practice is that extension officers dedicate much time to service keepers of livestock: they experience many problems related to the delivery and breeding of cattle, and, at least part of them, have incomes that enable them to pay for the extension services. Farmers who dedicate themselves to agriculture and farmers who live at great distance from the extension offices, as a general rule are not provided with extension services on an individual basis (Interviews- field workers and farmers).

Although extension officers are supposed to support all the farmers in their area, part of the farmers are never reached. As part of his field work, the researcher visited a number of non-organized farmers in Morogoro wards. These farmers told him that they had heard of the existence of extension officers – one farmer even knew the name of the ward extension officer – but that they had never seen him and that he had never visited them to inform himself

about their problems or offer advice (Interviews - field workers and farmers).

LACK OF EFFECTIVE LEADER- FOLLOWER RELATIONSHIP

In actual practice, District Agricultural and livestock officer and the District executive Director are the main leaders at the district level who are supposed to supervise the activities of the field workers. On the contrary, these officers to the larger extent rely on the monthly reports submitted by field workers. It is mandatory that the field workers must write a monthly report on their activities. Apart from indicating the number and type of farmers they visited, they are also supposed to identify specific problems and issues farmers encounter. In order to make up the monthly reports, the field workers themselves meet at the ward office where they discuss and compile the reports. In practice, the village and ward extension officials feel that they hardly get any feedback on their reports. If problems are signaled, the District does not do anything about them (Interview DAEO). The research shows that the extension officials have a large degree of discretion concerning their daily activities. Weekly schedules and the year calendar are formulated in a very general terms and supervision by headquarters is also general in character. Ward officials and officials from the headquarters do from time to time check whether extension officials actually visited groups or engaged in training sessions or field schools. But ward officials also suffer from limited means of transport. They primarily rely on monthly reports that only contain general information to assess the performance of the field workers. As long as village extension officials indicate the number and type of farmers they have visited, and visits have actually taken place, their superiors are satisfied (Monthly reports 2012/2013; interview DAEO).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The delivery of agricultural extension services is guided by formal rules which defines the roles and responsibilities of district officials and field workers. The roles and responsibilities are given by national level guidelines written by the ministry of agriculture. These also define the key responsibilities of village agricultural extension officers. In developing their working schedule, the field workers are guided by annual

calendar which define different seasons and the relevant knowledge required by farmers. Nevertheless, the field workers have a larger discretion to decide about the content of their working schedule and the implementation arrangement. The district officials who are the supervisors very rare provide training on how to develop or implement the working schedules. To the larger extent the supervisors at the district level rely on monthly reports which are produced by field workers every month. The assumption from the district level government is that the field workers must abide to code of ethics which define ethical expectation of all public servants. On the contrary, the field workers do not consider this as an important document and as result they consider service delivery to farmers as a favor. To understand this well, it is better to gain insight on the antecedents of ethical leadership in Tanzania. Ethical leadership has a being a major theme since the attainment of independence in Tanzania. Before independence, the colonialist established a law for prevention of corruption ordinance Cap 400 of 1958 to control the corrupt behavior of public servants. After independence, this did not help much. The public leaders equated leadership with wealth. In reaction to that, the Permanent Commission for Enquiry was established and embedded in the provision of the interim constitution of 1965 to deal with the issues of corruption (Tenga 2010). The second initiative for building ethical leadership was the inauguration of Arusha declaration which came with a code of ethics for TANU party leaders by Mwl Nyerere of 1967. A leader was defined as a member of TANU National Executive Committee, Ministers in Government, Members of Parliament, and senior officials of Organization Affiliated to TANU, Senior Officials of Parastatals, Leaders appointed under the TANU Constitution, Councilors of Local Government, and Civil Servants of high and middle caliber. The public leaders were supposed to declare their properties. In addition, Nyerere insisted on institutionalization of ethical norms such as human liberation, dignity, peace and justice were key to his personal ethics. Some of the ethical norms he modeled includes human dignity, liberation, peace and justice which were eventually institutionalized in the political system and culture and codified in his ujamaa philosophy (Nantulya 2015)

Furthermore, the ethical leadership was strengthened through the enactment of code of ethics for Public Leadership of 1995 which insisted on the following; first, the public leader was not supposed to put himself in a position where his personal interest conflicts with his responsibility as such leader. Second, experienced and competent persons were encouraged to seek positions in the public office, and facilitating interchange between the private and the public sector. Third, the clear rules of ethics in respect of conflict of interest for, and post-employment practices were established to reduce the conflicts of interests of public leaders. Nevertheless, despite all this development the role of ethical leadership has not received the required attention.

Therefore, the overall conclusion is that the problem of unethical behavior of public leadership in the delivery of agricultural advisory services is caused by overreliance on formal rules than exemplary leadership. The formal rules are necessary but not sufficient tool of changing unethical behavior. They must be complemented with values which guide the behavior of leaders and officials involved in decision making. There is a need for senior officials to be trained on organizational values and norms and in turn they must communicate ethical values through demonstration of a desired behaviour to their junior staff. The trainer can use the code of ethics for government officials and politicians which show a clear idea of the management's expectation with respect to employee code of conduct. Furthermore the local governments in Tanzania must establish the proper rewarding system of ethical behavior. The literature by Baumhart (1961), Mitchell and Schaeffer (2005), and Geeta et al. (2016) shows that rewarding ethical behavior can promote it. This implies that at least after training the employees on ethical behavior, they must be rewarded for positive behavior, so that they would not only continue to adhere to ethical practices but also inspire others to be ethical. Lastly is establishing negative reward through disciplining unethical behavior. In case some employees show any deviation from ethical behavior after training. The senior officers must impose sanction to unethical behavior. By doing that, it will help the employees to understand the implications of unethical behavior and the importance of ethically.

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